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aS622.S6

September

1982

Volume 3, Number 6

# Soil and Water Conservation News

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United States Department of Agriculture  
Soil Conservation Service



Soil and Water Conservation News is the official magazine of the Soil Conservation Service. The Secretary of Agriculture has determined that the publication of this periodical is necessary in the interest of public business required by law of the Department. Use of funds for printing *Soil and Water Conservation News* has been approved by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget through January 31, 1987. *Soil and Water Conservation News* (ISSN-0199-9060) is published 12 times a year. Postage paid at Washington, D.C.

**Magazine inquiries**  
Send inquiries to: The Editor, *Soil and Water Conservation News*, Public Information Staff, Soil Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 2890, Washington, D.C. 20013.

**Subscriptions**  
\$12 per year, \$15 foreign. Single copy domestic, \$2; foreign, \$2.50. Discounts of 25 percent on orders of 100 or more sent to the same address. Order directly from:

Superintendent of Documents  
U.S. Government Printing Office  
Washington, D.C. 20402

## Comments:

### From the SCS Chief

## SCS Volunteer Program Off to Strong Start

Thanks to the Agriculture and Food Act of 1981, the Soil Conservation Service now can accept the volunteer services of any person of any age or skill in helping with soil and water conservation programs. Since we announced the program in mid-May, the response has been excellent. More people are signing up every day.

One volunteer, actor Eddie Albert, a long-time friend of resource conservation, has recorded six radio spots to help promote the volunteer program. Other California volunteers include an education coordinator, a public affairs specialist, and an administrative aide. Several have never before worked for the Federal Government; others are USDA retirees.

SCS volunteers are unpaid, and they will definitely not displace any USDA employees. But they can free our employees to concentrate on priority work. They can help with field surveys and layout of conservation practices. They can aid in training students for soil and land judging contests and help with conservation education programs. They can help construct outdoor learning areas. They can help with public information campaigns or with bothersome paperwork. Many will help with conservation district chores as well as for SCS. When it's needed, we'll provide on-the-job training.

With the help of volunteers, we can be more responsive to farmers, ranchers, and other land users, and do a better job for less money in less time.



**Cover:** One of the "founding fathers" of conservation districts is Clarence Waybright of Mason-Dixon Farms near Gettysburg, Pa. In 1947, he helped organize countywide meetings that resulted in formation of the Adams County Soil Conservation District. (Photo, Tim McCabe, visual information specialist, Public Information, SCS, Washington, D.C.)



John R. Block  
Secretary of Agriculture

Peter C. Myers, Chief  
Soil Conservation Service

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Editor, Judith E. Ladd

Associate Editor, Nancy M. Garlitz

Assistant Editor, Donald L. Comis

Editorial Assistant, Ann P. Serota

Design Consultant, Christopher Lozos

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## The People of Soil and Water Conservation

Much of this issue is devoted to the people who make soil and water conservation possible. Some are "typical" conservationists, quietly going about the business of protecting our natural resources. Others are "standouts" in some way, perhaps because they were the first to accomplish something or were formally recognized for their accomplishments.

But whether they are Soil Conservation Service employees, conservation district officials, farmers, or ranchers, they represent the many thousands of people across our Nation—and beyond our borders—who have dedicated their lives to making this world a better place for everyone.

Christine Hirsch, one of the first SCS volunteers, and Richard Casale, SCS district conservationist in the Santa Cruz Resource Conservation District, review a conservation plan which Hirsch helped design.

### SCS in California First to Sign Up Volunteers

The Soil Conservation Service launched a new volunteer program the second week in May under the Agriculture and Food Act of 1981. Since then, many people have signed up to volunteer their time and talents to help SCS battle soil erosion and other natural resource problems.

On May 11, California signed up the first three SCS volunteers in the Nation. They include an education coordinator, a public affairs specialist, and an administrative aide who is a high school honor student. All three work in Soquel with the Santa Cruz Resource Conservation District (RCD) and have a history of natural resources volunteer work.

Christine Hirsch, the education coordinator, has a master's degree in education administration and community education. As an SCS volunteer, she is conducting a two-credit erosion control training course,

which she helped develop at Cabrillo Community College. The Santa Cruz RCD sponsors the free course and the college reimburses the district for expenses such as worksheets and books. Hirsch also conducts an advanced course in erosion control designed especially for people responsible for land use planning and resource conservation at the county level.

Hirsch says that conducting the class at Cabrillo College is the most rewarding part of her volunteer work. She says that she enjoys watching people of all ages "turning on" to a subject that they hadn't thought much about before. "Some of the things we talk about in class seem so basic," says Hirsch, "but it just amazes a lot of people when we discuss, for example, the effect a raindrop has on soil. Also, controlling soil erosion involves so many aspects of the environment that it makes us look at everything as part of a system. It's good for people to get a feel for that.

"More practically," says Hirsch, "my volunteer experience has opened up a lot of job opportunities for me." Under a grant from the local association of governments, Hirsch is working with the county planning department on preparing erosion control publications, setting up soil and water conservation workshops, and writing a guide describing how citizens can form road associations to receive assistance in solving severe erosion problems along the county's many unpaved roads. Hirsch spends about 4 hours a week from September to June teaching the erosion control classes and, when she has time, she assists SCS District Conservationist Richard Casale with conservation planning and special education and information programs.

Kathryn Lyster, the public affairs specialist who is also a soil conservationist, has a bachelor of science degree in natural resources and agricultural journalism. Her volunteer experience with the district and SCS also helped her to get a job with the county planning department. She is working on erosion control publications and meeting with farmers to set up demonstration



farms to show land users how conservation practices can help them. Lyster volunteers 4 to 6 hours a week to work with SCS in developing conservation plans; speaking at schools, clubs, and other meetings; and preparing information and education materials.

Eileen Hastings, the administrative aide, volunteers about 4 hours a week to assemble conservation plans and education packets; do typing, filing, copying, and other office machine work; and make followup phone calls for meetings and other appointments.

Casale says that the volunteers enable the regular SCS staff to cover a lot more ground and reach many more people who ask for conservation assistance. As for attracting volunteers, Casale says that the local SCS and conservation district program must be visible and active to make people want to be a part of it. He must know what he is talking about because in June he had two more volunteers waiting to sign up.

Henry Wyman, SCS public affairs specialist for California, says that the new SCS volunteer program has advantages for volunteers too. In addition to legal and insurance protection for any work-related injuries, volunteers will have an official record of their service to use in applying for other jobs.

Anyone may apply as an SCS volunteer—retirees, professionals and nonprofessionals, and students—anyone interested in conservation. On-the-job training will be given to those who need it.

People who volunteer their time and talents to help SCS and the local conservation districts can put more conservation on the land while keeping Federal costs down. There are personal rewards, too. Hirsch says of her volunteer service with SCS, "It's really worthwhile because it has put me in touch with something basic to everyday life, care of the soil."

**Nancy M. Garlitz,**  
associate editor, *Soil and Water Conservation News*, SCS, Washington, D.C.

## **Travel to Ecuador Reveals the Need for Conservation**

John Caviness, Soil Conservation Service district conservationist in Iredell, N.C., spent 2 weeks in Ecuador this past March teaching basic conservation practices. He is one of a growing number of SCS employees who have traveled to other countries to share their conservation knowledge.

During the first 2 days of his visit, Caviness toured Ecuador by jeep with Jose Espinosa and a soil fertility expert. Espinosa is one of the directors within Ecuador's National Institute of Investigations for Agronomy. Together they traveled through the Andes, and through jungle, desert, and coastal areas, for a total of 1,100 miles.

The U.S. Agency for International Development, in cooperation with SCS, arranged Caviness' trip with Ecuador's National Institute. His visit followed one by Espinosa to Iredell County in 1980 and gave Caviness a chance to evaluate Espinosa's attempts to adapt methods used in Iredell to Ecuador.

Espinosa chose Iredell to learn conservation practices because it has rolling land and erodible soils on a piedmont plateau similar to parts of Ecuador.

Agriculture is Ecuador's major industry, with bananas, coffee, and potatoes the leading exports. Caviness said the soil and climate of Ecuador are such that farmers grow a little bit of everything, but the yields are low and getting lower each year, due to erosion and infertility.

After the tour of Ecuador, Caviness led 27 technicians from various parts of the country on a jeep caravan tour of area farms to learn more about soil conservation problems and solutions. They built diversions and grassed waterways and planted borders on four farms. They also planned a way to use stripcropping on two fields and evaluated a dozen more farms.

Caviness visited farms of various sizes, from small farms that use oxen, wooden plows, and hoes to large farms with modern equipment. He said that the farmers

who plant small plots around the large farms work the plot until all the topsoil is used, then move to another plot, sometimes forcibly taking unused land from the large farms. Caviness recommended that Espinosa ask the owners of the large farms to demonstrate conservation practices on their land that would serve as a model for the other farmers.

Caviness said the only farms using conservation practices in Ecuador are those Espinosa worked with since his visit to Iredell. Caviness saw fields that had 6 inches of topsoil, which an expert told him had 6 feet of topsoil a little more than 10 years ago. Ecuador has an average 12 to 18 inches of topsoil left, Caviness estimates. While at a farm with highly erodible volcanic soils, where he stayed 3 days, Caviness saw a rainfall of less than 2 inches erode a knee-deep gully to one that was waist deep.

Caviness hopes that his visit will help spread conservation practices on more acres of cropland to save topsoil in a country that is blessed with the climate to grow almost any crop.

**Donald L. Comis,**  
assistant editor, *Soil and Water Conservation News*, SCS, Washington, D.C.



## She's One of a Kind in This Job

Down by the city lake in Reidsville, N.C., in the company of bulldozers and dusty construction, Angela Greene-Moorefield—wearing a hard hat—sifts through soil samples outside a tiny government trailer.

Her job as Soil Conservation Service construction inspector on the million-dollar Lake Reidsville project means, for the moment, developing engineering graphs that provide crucial soil data for construction crews.

That's just for the moment.

Between now and the end of the ambitious recreation project, she will interpret plans, solve problems, inspect the work to insure compliance with contract specifications, and bring her engineering background to bear on the day-to-day obstacles of a major construction effort. (SCS is providing technical and financial assistance for the Reidsville project through the North Central Piedmont Resource Conservation and Development Area. The project is being sponsored by the city of Reidsville and the Rockingham County Soil and Water Conservation District.)

Though she's not one to push the point, Greene-Moorefield is quietly pioneering a new field for women, a field in which she is the only female government inspector for SCS in North Carolina.

"I don't really consider myself unique," Greene-Moorefield says. "I don't think anyone out here is acting any differently because I'm here. If they are, I don't recognize it. The main thing is to get the job done. Once you're on the job, it doesn't matter whether you are male or female."

Greene-Moorefield began working with SCS in 1977 as a student trainee. In 1979 after she received her engineering degree, she took a full-time position with SCS as a civil engineer. Though there are a few female students in the trainee program in North Carolina now, Greene-Moorefield recognizes that she has moved into a field where women are an uncommon sight.

Occasionally she meets a farmer who

doesn't understand. Some of the men she dated didn't understand her motives and sense of independence. But Greene-Moorefield has learned to take these aberrations in stride.

"I am the only female engineer with the Soil Conservation Service in North Carolina right now, but I'm hoping to change that," she says.

Her words aren't idle chatter. She has trekked to career days in high schools to show young women that they don't have to map out futures with limited goals in mind. She also is serving as a member of the area and State equal employment opportunity committees in North Carolina.

She's a living example of a woman who has worked hard to carve out her own self-fulfilling goals. A mountain woman from Deep Gap, N.C., Greene-Moorefield says her parents are encouraging—even if they don't always understand.

"My mother certainly wanted me to go to college and get a good job," she says. "I think my father is proud of me, but I don't think he always understands why I'm doing this."

For Greene-Moorefield, the opportunity to gain experience in construction inspection has been a fortunate turn of events.

"I certainly didn't want an office job right off," she says. "And I love being outside."

Though the Soil Conservation Service would not normally send Greene-Moorefield, trained as an engineer, to take the reigns of government inspector on a major construction project, she says the inspectors who typically take on the jobs are tied up on other projects.

"I really think it is lucky for me because usually an engineer wouldn't have a chance to get as much field experience as this," Greene-Moorefield says. "It's good experience because I'm getting to deal with the everyday problems that an engineer would usually miss."

She's quick to point out, though, that she does not give orders and she does not operate the heavy equipment. "I'm not here to give orders. I can interpret the plans and if there's an obvious error, we can change that by talking to the people in charge."

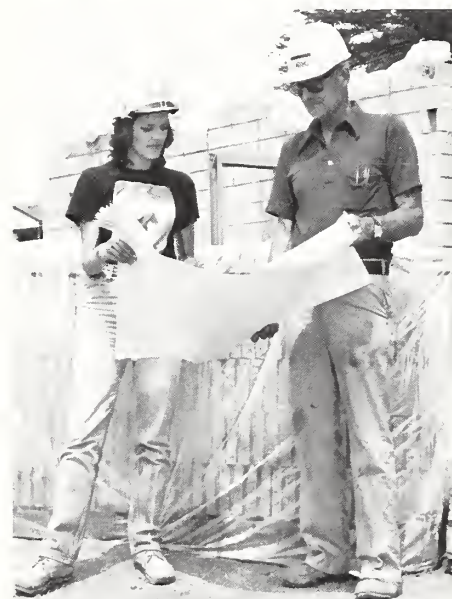
"Basically, I'm watching over the government's interest and the interests of the city of Reidsville," she says. "This is a cost-sharing project between the city and the government. And anytime you're spending public money—and in this case, the city's money, too—you want to be very careful and responsible."

That sense of responsibility often means night duty for Greene-Moorefield, who must stay ahead of the construction teams by studying the plans. Her copy of the recreation complex plans is covered with scribbled notes. And she maintains three job diaries to keep up with progress at the site.

What do her colleagues think of her work?

"Don't be fooled because she's a woman," says John W. Roberts of Madison, a part-time employee of SCS and assistant to Greene-Moorefield. "She knows what she's doing and she's good at it."

Adapted from an article by Tim Pittman in the April 18, 1982, edition of the *Greensboro Daily News*, Greensboro, N.C.



SCS Engineer Angela Greene-Moorefield discusses construction plans with Elbert Lineberry, job superintendent at the Lake Reidsville project.

## Navajo Tribe Forms Conservation Districts

Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block recently signed memorandums of understanding with three soil and water conservation districts on the Navajo Indian Reservation, covering parts of Arizona, Utah, and New Mexico. A fourth conservation district on the reservation began operation in June 1981, and a fifth district is being formed.

When all five districts are official, they will add more than 12 million acres to the district movement in Arizona and neighboring States. This will be a major step forward in resource management on Indian lands.

The districts are being formed under Navajo tribal code. This first became possible in July 1977 when the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture agreed to transfer responsibility for providing conservation technical assistance to Indians from the Department of the Interior to the Department of Agriculture.

Soon after, officials of the Navajo Tribe in Arizona contacted the Soil Conservation Service requesting assistance, particularly with range management. In May 1978, SCS Range Conservationist Frank Parrill transferred from Colorado to Window Rock, Ariz., to work with the Navajo Tribe under an intergovernmental personnel agreement. Largely as a result of his efforts, the Navajo tribal council passed legislation in February 1980 authorizing the formation of conservation districts under tribal code.

In June 1981, the Little Colorado Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) became the first district to be officially organized. The Navajo Mountain, Fort Defiance, and Chinle SWCD's are the three newest districts and the Shiprock SWCD is being organized.

Boundaries of these new districts coincide with the existing grazing districts established by the tribe and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Because the Navajo Nation extends into Utah and New Mexico, the boundaries of all but the

Little Colorado SWCD also cross State lines. The Shiprock SWCD will include portions of all three States.

Last year, SCS District Conservationist Sid Brantley was assigned to the Tuba City, Ariz., field office to work with the Little Colorado SWCD. According to District Chairman Howard Dugi, in this area with an average rainfall of 6 to 15 inches, the district's top priority is water development for livestock, irrigation, and domestic uses. Brantley worked with the district cooperators to plan ponds, wells, and spring developments as well as water harvesting from artificial catchments. Their goal is to correct the severe range depletion and excessive erosion of tribal land.

In the meantime, Frank Parrill continues to work with the Navajo communities as SCS district conservationist out of Window Rock. In addition to working with the tribal council to establish conservation districts, Parrill has provided conservation technical

assistance to individual Navajo land users and has provided instruction to the tribal grazing committee members who are responsible for overseeing local land use on the reservation. He coauthored the Navajo Nation Range Management Handbook, which resulted from his work on a range resource program for the tribal department of resources.

In May 1982, in recognition of his achievements in working with the Navajo Tribe during the last 4 years, Frank Parrill received USDA's Superior Service Award.

Having seen what the Navajo Tribe and SCS have accomplished, three other tribes in Arizona, the Hopi, White Mountain Apache, and San Carlos Apache, have expressed interest in working with SCS on soil and water conservation.

**Charles R. Adams,**  
area conservationist, SCS, Flagstaff, Ariz.



Howard Dugi, chairman of the Little Colorado Soil and Water Conservation District, observes the Moencopi Wash Irrigation Project and severe erosion in the background.



## SCS Office in Guam Opens for Business

Nearly 4,000 miles from the nearest Soil Conservation Service office in Hawaii, Resource Conservationist Joan Perry has recently been assigned to head the first SCS office in Agana, Guam. Located east of the international dateline from Hawaii, Perry has the added distinction of being the first SCS employee to open up the office each workday.

Secretary of Agriculture John Block authorized the expanded technical assistance under Public Law 96-597, governing USDA assistance to the territories. Previous SCS help had been limited to some soil survey work reimbursed by the island governments. In addition to Guam, the territories include the Northern Mariana Islands, the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, and American Samoa. The more than 2,000 islands span several million square miles over a distance of more than 3,000 nautical miles. The combined land area is just over 500,000 acres.

Early in the planning stage, Guam Governor Paul M. Calvo and representatives from his Department of Agriculture met with Jack P. Kanalz, then SCS State conservationist for Hawaii, to discuss ways of improving Guam's soil and forestry resources.

"The Guam office isn't a field office strictly speaking, as they have yet to develop the legislation needed to establish soil and water conservation districts," said Francis C. H. Lum, current SCS State conservationist for Hawaii. "Helping the government there to get districts started is one of Joan's first priorities."

In addition to working on solving soil problems and developing a natural resources program in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, Perry will represent SCS in cooperative forestry protection and management programs already extended to Guam under the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act.

Before leaving the SCS State office in Hawaii for Guam in late April, Perry recalled some problems she had noted

when living on Guam in the late 1960's. She remembered typhoons that level vegetation as well as houses, and fires running across grasslands, leaving the land open to erosion. The land available for future agricultural use is mostly of the rough grasslands type.

She expects her work in the Northern Marianas will take her to Tinian, which has a large cattle ranch, and to Rota, one of the larger agricultural areas in the Marianas, where row crops are grown.

Perry is particularly suited for the Guam position, having lived in the area for 8 years, starting in 1966 when she spent 4 years as a school principal and then 4 more years working on a Trust Territory training program. Traveling among the far-flung islands, she became attuned to the Micronesian people and their way of life, and realized she wanted to work in rural regions.

After Perry and her husband, Ronald, moved to Oregon, she attended Oregon State University to get a bachelor's degree in agriculture. Perry also holds degrees from the universities of Colorado, Guam, and Oklahoma.

Perry had 8 years' service with SCS, with 4½ of those years as a district conservationist in Oregon, before she applied for the Guam position.

The SCS office is located at the University of Guam with clerical assistance supplied by the university. SCS in Hawaii had earlier sent Ernest Robello, SCS district conservationist for Maui, at Guam's request to the university to develop a conservation plan for an experimental farm the university is setting up.

Perry will be joined by a full-time soil scientist in the Guam office in October, who will make surveys of 134,000 acres on Guam and 88,000 acres in the Northern Marianas, in both mountainous and more accessible terrains.

Perry's husband, a land surveyor, returned to Guam with her, as well as the two younger of their three children. The oldest daughter is married.

**Phyllis M. Charles,**  
public affairs specialist, Honolulu, Hawaii

## Saving 'Alamo'

A conservation plant was in trouble and all it took to save it was a well-directed information campaign.

In 1978, the Soil Conservation Service in cooperation with the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station released 'Alamo' switchgrass. Alamo is a native grass that greens up earlier in the spring in South Texas and stays green later in the fall than any other grass. Livestock producers in the southern two-thirds of Texas have desperately needed a dependable strain of switchgrass for use in range and pasture plantings. Alamo was selected to fill that need.

From 1979 to 1981, seed producers started growing the grass. By early 1982, however, the grass was in trouble because seed dealers were unable to sell the seed. If seed dealers couldn't sell Alamo, it wouldn't get planted, producers wouldn't harvest any more seed, and several years of selection and field testing would have been in vain.

To help solve the problem, Dale D. Allen, SCS public affairs specialist for Texas, designed a simple but effective information campaign. It consisted of a news release that SCS district conservationists in South and Central Texas could use to explain the advantages of Alamo and a feature article published in the January 7, 1982, edition of the *Southwest Farm Press*, which reaches 52,000 farmers and ranchers in Texas.

The campaign was so successful that seed dealers producing Alamo switchgrass had sold all their seed by planting time in the spring and had to turn down orders for more.

## People Saving People

On Friday morning, April 30, 1982, Soil Conservation Service Soil Conservation Technician Lupe Saldivar was driving south on Highway 41, after leaving his Estancia, N. Mex., field office, when a fully loaded cement truck passed him, blew a front tire, and rolled over six times.

Saldivar stopped and ran to the truck with a fire extinguisher. The truck was laying on its side, and the concrete-mixing tank had broken loose. The driver sat in the only part of the truck that wasn't crushed.

Saldivar put his coat under the driver's head to ease the strain on his neck just as the diesel fuel that had been leaking from a large tank behind the truck's cab exploded into flames.

Saldivar tried to remove the driver but couldn't, so he sprayed the fire with his extinguisher and put it out. Had he left the extinguisher in his own truck, which was parked about 500 feet away, the fire would have been uncontrollable by the time he returned with the extinguisher.

When the rescue squad arrived, they spent more than 1 hour freeing the driver from the wreckage. The man, who wore a seat belt as required by his company, walked away from the accident with a few scratches.

On June 3, Ray Margo, Jr., SCS State conservationist for New Mexico, awarded Saldivar a certificate of merit and a cash award "for your courageous and heroic handling of an accident while on official duty."

Saldivar is one of several SCS employees in New Mexico and one of many throughout the Nation who have saved lives in recent years, often with the help of SCS-sponsored training in first aid or cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). In New Mexico, SCS gives all field employees courses in defensive driving and first aid with refresher courses every 3 years.

Four months earlier, on December 30, 1981, Scott Steele, then an SCS student trainee, was driving from Emporium, Pa., to the SCS Brookville field office when he saw smoke coming from the eaves of an old house along the road.

Steele stopped and told an elderly man, who lived alone in the house, that his house was on fire. The man refused to leave even though Steele could see the glow of flames behind the living room wall, where a stovepipe had caught fire. Steele grabbed a fire extinguisher from his truck and an ax from the man's porch and ran upstairs, followed by the man. Steele chopped a hole in the wall to spray the fire. After he emptied the fire extinguisher, he threw buckets of water on the fire. Then flames started to come out of the wall and the smoke got too thick to breathe. Steele and the man walked downstairs, crouching under heavy smoke.

When Steele put the man's several cats, along with boxes of books and magazines, on the front porch, the man agreed to wait on the porch until the fire department arrived. The house suffered extensive damage; but when Steele drove by the next morning, he could see by the smoke from a second chimney that the man had moved back in.

Steele graduated from Pennsylvania State University this year and is now an SCS soil conservationist at Tunkhannock, Pa.

On a cold Sunday afternoon last January, Bonnie McKee, an SCS budget and accounting analyst in Fort Worth, Tex., was working in her kitchen when she heard someone hollering. She ran outside and found her neighbor pinned under the front axle of his pickup truck. He had been working under the truck when it started moving down the sloping driveway. McKee and her son-in-law put blocks of wood behind the rear wheels of the truck to stop it from rolling farther. They used a jack to lift the truck. Then they pulled their neighbor out and covered him with blankets until the ambulance came. He was treated at a hospital for shock and bruises on his head and shoulders and released the same day.

On March 20, 1981, Keith Huffman, SCS State soil scientist for Ohio, was a passenger in a car driven by a State official when the official suffered a heart attack. Huffman brought the car to a stop as it ran off the road, and worked to re-

vive the man using CPR, which he had learned through SCS-sponsored training only 5 weeks before. He administered CPR for about 10 minutes until the rescue squad took over. The State official spent some 3 months in the hospital, but was able to return to work. Huffman encourages every SCS employee to learn CPR.

Bill Towns is another SCS employee who used his CPR training, from the U.S. Navy and SCS, to save a life. Towns is an SCS soil conservation technician in Pittsburgh, Pa.

On a Saturday afternoon in May 1981, Towns was shopping for clothes in a Pittsburgh store when the salesperson who was waiting on him suddenly grabbed the sales counter and began to fall. Towns eased the employee to the floor and began CPR. The store manager called the rescue squad and they took over when they arrived. The man was out of the hospital the same day, thanks to Towns.

These five employees are examples of many SCS and other Federal employees who save lives on and off duty because they care enough about people to help them, whether they are friends or strangers.

**Donald L. Comis,**  
assistant editor, *Soil and Water Conservation News*, SCS, Washington, D.C.

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## Organ Donors Provide a Living Legacy

Rosella Thraikill, Soil Conservation Service personnel officer for Oregon, saves lives by encouraging others to sign up as organ donors as she, her husband, her daughter, and her son have. The Oregon donor program became a personal cause for her after her son, Terry, died at age 19 after a motorcycle accident.

Hospital officials asked Thraikill if she would let them use skin and organs from her son. She agreed because she knew that was what her son wished.



A team of surgeons from Stanford University's medical school flew to Portland to remove his heart, while another team at Stanford began preparing a man to receive the heart. They rushed because a heart and other major organs such as kidneys must be removed from bodies within minutes after death and transplanted within 70 hours, or sooner, if they are not in a special machine designed to preserve organs.

Terry's skin, actually only a very thin slice of tissue off the top layer no thicker than the layer that peels off sunburned skin, went to provide a temporary living bandage for a pilot who had been critically burned over most of her body when her plane crashed in southern Oregon the day of Terry's motorcycle accident.

One of Terry's kidneys went to a woman in Seattle, Wash., and the corneas of his eyes gave sight to two Portland women.

The hospital located the recipients with a computer and telephone search. Terry had advised family members he wanted to be a donor. In many cases, hospital officials know this when they see a "D," for "donor," printed on a driver's license. They then look for a donor card, which, when signed in the presence of two witnesses, is a legal document in every State. But officials in Oregon's donor program have a policy of not removing organs without the family's consent.

Oregon was the seventh State in the Nation to begin an organ donor program after the Uniform Anatomical Gift Act became law in the early 1970's. Today, practically every State asks driver's license applicants if they want to be donors.

More than 5,000 people are currently waiting for kidney transplants, according to Gene Pierce, executive director of the Southeastern Organ Procurement Foundation, United Network for Organ Sharing.

Thraikill has become a volunteer spokesperson for the Oregon donor program since her son's death and has promoted the program in radio and television interviews. She knows that kidney transplants have become routine in the past

10 years and that there are many people on the waiting list. She also knows how it feels to have a living legacy left to her by her only son. His gift of life has helped her cope with the tragedy of losing him.

Anyone interested in more information about donor programs may call the United Network for Organ Sharing, at 800-446-2726, or write to P.O. Box 5392, Richmond, Va. 23220.

Donald L. Comis,  
assistant editor, *Soil and Water Conservation News*, SCS, Washington, D.C.

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## Looking Back on Forty Years of Conservation

Tomas Vanasek remembers well the day he founded the Contra Costa Resource Conservation District (RCD) in California. It was the day after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, swiftly bringing the United States into the battles of World War II.

Last December, 40 years after that fateful day, the Contra Costa RCD honored Vanasek for his role in soil and water conservation.

Vanasek, who at age 88 is as interested in learning about soil and water conservation as he was 50 years ago, came to Walnut Creek, Calif., in 1925, where he bought a 25-acre walnut orchard.

The orchards he owned are gone now—Vanasek was forced to sell them in 1964 when taxes went sky high. Development has since taken over, but Vanasek recalls vividly how his problems growing walnuts led him to form the conservation district.

"It didn't take a Philadelphia lawyer to figure out that after a heavy rain my topsoil was going downhill," Vanasek said. The lost topsoil, and the rainwater that didn't soak into the soil, was diminishing Vanasek's crop.

After some investigation, Vanasek discovered a program run by a Federal Government agency—the Soil Conservation Service—which provided free technical assistance to farmers.

SCS specialists looked at his land and discovered that several inches below the topsoil was a hard layer of "plow pan"—just like a clay barrier—which was keeping water from soaking into the land.

They advised Vanasek to plant cover crops rich in nitrogen, such as oats, barley, and leguminous plants, which would break up the barrier and allow the water to reach the roots of the walnut trees.

"Their program of work was exactly what I needed to conserve topsoil and save water," Vanasek said. "I was so enthused about it, I told other farmers."

After persuading farm owners wary of the Federal Government's getting involved in their affairs that the Soil Conservation Service would only provide advice on how to best utilize their land, Vanasek was able to get enough support to form the conservation district in 1941.

Approved by the Contra Costa Board of Supervisors on December 7 after getting the go-ahead from the State, the original board of directors had their first meeting December 12.

"There were no dues, no commitments," Vanasek said. "All you had to do was sign an agreement that you'll carry out the farm plan designed by the soil staff of the district."

In his 13 years as board president and 13 years as secretary, "I don't know of a single instance where a farmer refused to cooperate," Vanasek remarked.

The district, which originally covered only central Contra Costa but now includes the entire county, has accomplished much to improve the quality of farmland and soil and water conservation, according to Vanasek.

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Adapted from an article by Erin Hallissy in the December 6, 1981, edition of the *Contra Costa Times*, Walnut Creek, Calif.

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## City Dweller Turns Part-Time Farmer

By day, he wears an executive's three-piece suit. By night, hammer in hand, he's pulling nails from salvaged lumber. By day, he deals with job training, neighborhood centers, and dwindling Federal money. By night, he deals with greenbugs. By day, Harold Peterson is director of the Wichita, Kans., Human Resources Department, where he runs the city's social services programs. By night, he is a Sedgwick County farmer.

Peterson, a black, is bucking a national trend. Farms owned and run by blacks are declining at such an "alarming" rate, according to a recent report by the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, that they may disappear by the end of the century.

"When we look at minorities who own land, there are very few in Sedgwick County," said Peterson.

He says he doesn't want it to sound like bragging, but notes, "The little piece of land I've got makes me one of the largest minority landowners in Sedgwick County."

Actually, Peterson didn't get into farming to stem the decline; he sort of slipped into it. What he really wanted, he says, was 2 or 3 acres where he could build a home, plant a few fruit trees, and expand his garden.

What he got was 35 acres of cattle and wheat fields. And a whale of an education.

His first crop was alfalfa. The man who cut it for him paid Peterson \$1 a bale, then turned around and sold it for \$3. "I didn't know," Peterson says with a shrug of his shoulders.

Then he turned to wheat, which brought greenbugs and soil erosion problems. On the advice of a friend, he contacted the Sedgwick County Conservation District, and in March 1981 became a district cooperator. He worked with the Soil Conservation Service to develop a conservation plan, which included terracing.

"At that point, I didn't know what it was going to cost," Peterson says, adding that he thought the terracing would be a

matter of erecting something like snow fences.

It cost \$3,000, but USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service picked up 60 percent of the cost through the Agricultural Conservation Program.

According to SCS District Conservationist Larry L. Henry, Peterson is an innovator with a new practice for Sedgwick County—plastic pipe terrace outlets.

"I'm just elated with what they've done. The soil's holding," says Peterson. The project also made Peterson the 1981 recipient of the S. T. and Eva Crow Pioneer Conservation Award, given by the Sedgwick County Conservation District. He was the first black recipient of the award.

Harold and Joyce Peterson aren't full-time farmers yet, although both say they're looking forward to that day. They maintain a home in Wichita and go out to the farm as often as they can. There's no house on the land yet, but Peterson says he has the plans for one ready.

"I would hope to be out there within a year," he says. "That's according to what these interest rates do."

In the meantime, he'll continue to enjoy the benefits of part-time farm life, where he has a chance "to smell the breeze, to see the sky. So often, that city life gets to running and you forget about those things," he says.

He'll continue his farm education, too. He says now he knows what farmers mean when they complain about people dumping trash or unwanted animals on their land.

He says he's learned not to take for granted such necessities as electricity and water. And he says he's learned there's an art to digging a fence hole or stringing a barbed wire fence.

"I just never pictured myself having a tractor or a truck," he says in retrospect. "And now, I couldn't do without them."

Adapted from articles in the *West Sedgwick County News Sentinel*, Goddard, Kans., and the *Wichita Eagle-Beacon*, Wichita, Kans.

## Civil Rights Commission Reports on Loss of Black Farms

The U.S. Civil Rights Commission calls on all USDA agencies to emphasize the need to provide financial and technical assistance to minority farmers, especially black small farm operators. In a recent report, "The Decline of Black Farming in America," the Commission says that while displacement from the land looms as a threat to all small farmers, land loss occurred most severely among black small farm operators.

In the report, the Commission makes several recommendations to slow the current rate of decline of black-operated farms, which is 2½ times the rate of decline for white-operated farms. One major recommendation is for USDA to develop a coordinated program to increase and strengthen services to minority farmers. The Commission recommends that all USDA agencies be required to plan and carry out specific activities and set specific goals that can be measured and evaluated, with special emphasis on outreach to minorities.

The Commission's report gives the history of black farming in the United States and describes the discrimination against black farmers in granting limited resource loans and providing adequate technical assistance.

Single copies of this report are available from Publications Warehouse, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 621 North Payne Street, Alexandria, Va. 22314.

**Nancy M. Garlitz,**  
associate editor, *Soil and Water Conservation News*, SCS, Washington, D.C.

## Award-Winning Rancher

Awards aren't anything new to Nick Burman, an eastern Montana rancher. In 1975, for example, the Dawson County Conservation District named him cooperator of the year. But last December, he didn't know he was going to receive the State Rangeman of the Year Award, presented by the State Rural Area Development Committee, until his name was announced at the awards banquet in Bozeman.

The State Rural Area Development Committee is composed of representatives of business, government, civic organizations, and other groups and individuals.

Burman won the award because of the range improvements he has made on his 4,000-acre ranch 10 miles east of Glendive over a 25-year period. When he and his wife, Ginger, bought the ranch in 1956, it was covered with low-value needleandthread grass, had insufficient water for grazing cattle, was plagued with

wind and water erosion problems, and wasn't completely bounded by fencing.

Today, however, more than 10 miles of cross fencing divides the ranch into separate grazing areas, an 11,000-foot pipeline carries water to the livestock grazing areas, and a deferred rotation grazing system helps improve calf weight and keeps the range plants in healthy condition. Burman says the improved grass and rotation grazing program has increased fall calf weight by 75 to 100 pounds.

Not only has Burman taken the management of his rangeland seriously, but he also handles his cropland equally well. Planting his crops in contour strips with the use of grass buffer areas, he has kept soil erosion to a minimum.

Needless to say, the improvements didn't come all at once; over the years, Burman has worked to improve his acreage step by step. He became a cooperator with the Dawson County Conservation District in 1967. In 1976, in cooperation with the Soil Conservation

Service, he entered the Great Plains Conservation Program, a voluntary, cost-share program that helps ranchers plan conservation systems that benefit their operations and the land as well.

"The Great Plains program is a very good system with lots of good practices to follow," Burman said. "There sure is a lot of return for the investment. Saving on my grass has helped me make it through the last 2 years of drought."

Burman said he used to run 140 to 150 head but had to sell 20 head because of grass conditions created by the drought. He said if the county gets some good livestock years, he will increase his herds again.

"If it weren't for good grass and the pipeline," he said, "I would have had to sell even more cows."

**Mike Carlson,**  
district conservationist, SCS, Glendive, Mont.

## Mother of 10 Receives Homemaker of the Year Award

Ruth Lindsay, who lives near Beeville, Tex., was recently named homemaker of the year by the Bee Soil and Water Conservation District.

All of the Lindsay's 10 children, 5 sons and 5 daughters, earned college degrees; 6 also earned graduate degrees and 3 are presently working toward advanced degrees.

"We have tried to instill in our children the need for an education," Ruth Lindsay said. "We not only stressed education as a vehicle for success, but we also emphasized the need to care for the land."

The Lindsays own a 256-acre farm near Beeville.

Their oldest son is a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Air Force stationed in Korea and the youngest is a medical student at Harvard. The other eight children's accomplishments are similar.

Ruth Lindsay has quite a list of accomplishments herself. She was active in 4-H work for 20 years and worked with the Red Cross, PTA, and Little League. She currently is involved in church activities.

While the children were growing up, Ruth Lindsay made all of their clothes and hats. The girls learned to sew as soon as they were old enough. The boys helped their father butcher the hogs and smoke the meat.

Everyone worked in the garden and helped can the vegetables. They sold eggs, milk, and watermelons to help make ends meet. Ruth Lindsay said the farm was self-supportive. "We tried to teach our children the value of hard work," she said.

**Gail H. Thompson,**  
soil conservationist, SCS, Beeville, Tex.





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## RCA Update

Agriculture Secretary John R. Block announced the proposed new national soil and water conservation program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) on July 19, 1982, in a speech before the Midwestern Governors Conference in Des Moines, Iowa. The program was developed under terms of the Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act of 1977 (RCA).

Under the program USDA will:

- address national conservation objectives;
- give increased emphasis to national conservation priorities;
- redirect USDA conservation programs to target additional assistance to critical resource problem areas;
- provide a base level of assistance to help landowners deal with resource problems and maintain resource conditions in nontargeted areas;
- provide Federal matching block grants to conservation districts as an inducement for State and local governments to take a more active role in soil and water conservation; and
- improve the planning and management of USDA conservation programs.

Secretary Block and his top staff developed the program after analyzing the public's comments on the revised draft 1981 RCA Program Report and Environmental Impact Statement. A majority of those who responded during the public comment period in late 1981 and early 1982 supported most of the features of the Secretary's preferred program as presented on a USDA response form. The following features, all supported by a majority of the respondents, are included in the national program:

- establishing clear national priorities;
- strengthening the conservation partnership;

- allowing for local problem identification, priority setting, and program development;
- providing closer cooperation and budget coordination within USDA;
- targeting funds and personnel;
- emphasizing cost-effective conservation measures;
- emphasizing conservation systems;
- targeting USDA research and education;
- setting up pilot projects;
- requiring that recipients of some loans from the Farmers Home Administration have a conservation plan;
- evaluating and analyzing conservation progress;
- minimizing conflicts among features of USDA programs;
- strengthening data collection and analysis; and
- expanding the use of long-term agreements.

In response to the public's concerns, the Secretary modified the priorities proposed for the national program. The first priority is erosion control, as originally proposed. Water conservation and flood damage reduction are co-equal second priorities. Additional priorities will be set at the State and local levels from among the following other national resource concerns: range, pasture, and forest land improvement; agricultural land retention; water quality improvement; urban and community natural resource conservation and development; fish and wildlife habitat improvement; and organic waste management.

The program provides for targeting an increasing share of Soil Conservation Service (SCS) and Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) technical and financial assistance to designated critical resource problem areas. After 5 years, 25 percent of these funds will be targeted to critical areas. Seventy-five percent of the technical and financial

assistance funds available to SCS and ASCS will be retained as a part of a base program for USDA assistance. Targeting is the core of the national program because it will increase the effectiveness of USDA's conservation program and because the existing economic situation precludes any other approach.

The program features that did not receive a majority of support were changed or dropped. The feature that provided for Federal matching block grants to States was modified to allocate the grants to conservation districts through State conservation agencies as part of a continuing program under the authority of the Agriculture and Food Act of 1981. The four features that provided for local and State conservation coordinating boards, a national conservation board, and an agreement between the Secretary of Agriculture and each Governor were deleted from the final national program.

The 1982 final RCA program report and environmental impact statement (entitled "A National Program for Soil and Water Conservation") will be delivered to USDA agencies, national organizations, and others later this year. A summary of the program will be distributed at the same time to everyone who responded during the public comment period.

The President is expected to transmit formally the final report and a statement of RCA policy to Congress this fall.

**James N. Benson,**  
writer-editor, Planning and Evaluation,  
SCS, Washington, D.C.